

METHOD AND DEVICE FOR MONITORING THE APPLICATION OF A
MOTOR VEHICLE AUTOMATIC PARKING BRAKE

The invention relates to a device and a method for
5 monitoring the application of a motor vehicle automatic
parking brake.

10 Parking brakes with which motor vehicles are
conventionally equipped are "hand" brakes which
comprise a lever connected by a cable to a mechanism
for applying two of the brakes of the vehicle.

15 In order to apply such a parking brake, the driver of a
vehicle pulls on the control lever and more or less
feels a brake-application force from the resistance to
movement of the lever, particularly towards the end of
its travel. If the vehicle is parked on a slope and
begins to move, that encourages the driver to pull more
20 firmly on the lever in order to apply the brakes more
firmly and immobilize the vehicle. It is always
incumbent upon the driver of the vehicle to apply the
parking brake and to do so correctly.

25 Certain models of vehicle are currently equipped with
automatic parking brakes comprising driven means for
applying two of the brakes of the vehicle, these means
being operated for example by an electric contactor.
Actuation of this contactor on the part of the driver
causes two of the brakes of the vehicle to be applied,
30 one on the right and one on the left. If, for any
reason, one of these brakes is not correctly applied,
the driver has no direct or indirect way of knowing
this unless the vehicle is parked on a slope and begins
to move. It is therefore necessary to provide a means
35 for monitoring the correct application of motor vehicle
automatic parking brakes.

To do this, one conceivable way is to fit strain gauges
into a vehicle brake in order to check that this brake

has been applied correctly on the strength of the signals supplied by the strain gauges. However, such a solution would be too expensive because of the relatively high cost of strain gauges.

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It is a particular object of the invention to afford a simple, satisfactory and economical solution to the problem of monitoring the application of these parking brakes.

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To this end, the invention provides a device for monitoring the application of a motor vehicle automatic parking brake, this parking brake comprising driven means of applying at least one brake pad to a brake disk of a wheel of the vehicle, the device being characterized in that it comprises measurement means for measuring a physical property of the pad, the value of which varies as a function of the force with which the pad is applied to the brake disk.

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The invention has the advantage of using a property of the brake pad to check whether the brake-application force of the corresponding brake is sufficient, this being a simple and economical embodiment of the monitoring device.

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Advantageously, this device comprises comparison means for comparing the measured values of said property with values prerecorded in memory, these comparison means being connected to means for commanding the application of the parking brake. That allows this brake to be reapplied automatically if need be.

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In a first embodiment of the invention, this physical property is an electrical magnitude associated with the electrical conductivity of the pad, and in particular of the friction lining of this pad.

All that is then needed is an electrical power supply

and a measurement apparatus of the volt meter type for example, these being connected to the brake pad by electrical conductors in order to measure the conductivity of the friction lining.

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In one particular form of the invention, the friction lining of the brake pad is made of a conventional material to which an electrically conducting component, such as copper or carbon black for example, has been 10 added, this component being distributed or incorporated within the material of the friction lining in such a way that the conductivity or electrical resistivity thereof varies as a function of the brake-application force applied to it.

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In a variant embodiment of the invention, the brake pad comprises a wear indicator which is formed of an electrically conducting element embedded in the friction lining and connected by an electrical 20 conductor to a circuit powering a light indicator when the wear indicator comes into contact with the brake disk, as a result of friction lining wear.

In this case, the invention anticipates adding an 25 electrically conducting component to the material of the friction lining, solely in that part of this lining which lies between the wear indicator and the metal backing to which the lining is attached.

30 This variant embodiment has the advantage that the physical magnitude measured when the friction lining is being applied is independent of the extent to which this lining is worn.

35 In another embodiment of the invention, the measured physical property of the brake pad is an acoustic magnitude, such as the acoustic impedance of the brake pad or of its friction lining.

In this case, an emitter/receiver of an appropriate acoustic wave is associated with the brake pad or with the friction lining and the variations in the output signal of the receiver are measured in order to 5 determine and verify the corresponding brake-application force.

The invention also provides a method for monitoring the application of a motor vehicle automatic parking brake, 10 this parking brake comprising driven means of applying at least one brake pad to a brake disk of a wheel of the vehicle, characterized in that it essentially consists, following a command to apply the parking brake, in measuring a physical property of the brake 15 pad, this property varying as a function of the force with which this pad is applied, in comparing the measurement with a prerecorded value and, if the measurement is below the prerecorded value, in once again commanding the application of the parking brake 20 and/or in emitting a signal for the attention of the driver of the vehicle.

For preference, the method according to the invention consists in measuring said physical property of the pad 25 at different instants following a command to apply the parking brake, in comparing the measured values with corresponding prerecorded values and in once again commanding the application of the parking brake if at least one of the measurements or the variation in the 30 value between the measurements is below the corresponding prerecorded value.

It is thus possible, in particular, to measure an initial value of the physical property of the brake 35 pad, at the instant that a command to apply the automatic parking brake is given by the driver of the vehicle, then to measure this property when the brakes are applied by the driven means, and to measure this property once again after the brakes have been

mechanically locked and the driven means have returned to their position of rest.

Doing this makes it possible to take account of 5 mechanical relaxation of the brakes when the driven brake-application means are no longer activated and to check that the parking brake is still correctly applied following this mechanical relaxation. Advantageously, it is also possible once again to measure the physical 10 property of the brake pad a certain time following the application of the parking brake, in order to allow the brakes to cool and return to a normal or near-normal temperature.

15 That in particular allows the automatic parking brake to be reapplied if necessary, when it has been commanded by the driver of the vehicle following intensive braking that has caused the vehicle brakes to heat up significantly and experience corresponding 20 thermal expansion.

The invention will be better understood and other features, details and advantages thereof will become more clearly apparent from reading the description 25 which follows, given by way of example with reference to the attached drawings in which:

- Figure 1 schematically depicts an exemplary embodiment of a monitoring device according to the invention, equipping a motor vehicle disk brake;
- Figure 2 schematically depicts a variant embodiment of this device;
- Figure 3 is a graph representing the variation in force experienced by a brake pad as a function of time upon actuation of an automatic parking brake.

35 In Figure 1, the reference 1 denotes a brake disk secured to a wheel (not depicted) of a motor vehicle and which is intended to be clamped between two brake pads 2 (just one of which is depicted in Figure 1)

which are urged against the opposite faces of the disk 1 by a hydraulic brake in a set-up of a known type.

5 Each brake pad 2 comprises a lining 3 made of a friction material and attached, for example by bonding, to a metal backing 4.

10 According to the invention, this friction material also comprises an electrically conducting component C for example in powdered or granular form, for example copper or carbon black, or granules of insulating elements coated with a conductive coat which is distributed through the friction lining 3 in such a way that the resistivity or electrical conductivity thereof 15 varies appreciably as a function of the compression force applied to it when the corresponding brake is applied. This distribution is advantageously uniform.

20 This conductivity or electrical resistivity may be measured by means of the device depicted in Figure 1 which essentially comprises a measurement apparatus 5 of the volt meter type for example, and an electrical power supply circuit 6 which may consist of the electric battery of the motor vehicle or of a specific 25 supply circuit powered from the vehicle's battery.

30 The measurement apparatus 5 and the power supply circuit 6 are connected to one another, to the friction lining 3 of the brake pad and to the brake disk 1 by electrical conductors 7 as depicted in order to form a closed circuit so that the measurement signal supplied by the apparatus 5 varies with the conductivity or electrical resistivity of the friction lining 3, which 35 itself varies with the force with which the linings of the brake pads are applied to the disk 1. Typically, the resistivity decreases with the compression.

The output signal from the apparatus 5 is applied to one input of means 9, advantageously digital means,

comprising values prerecorded in memory and means for comparing the signal 8 with these prerecorded values.

The output from the means 9 is connected to means 10
5 for commanding the application of the parking brake.

As a variant, the assembly formed by the measurement apparatus 5 and the power supply circuit 6 may be connected, not to the brake disk 1 as depicted, but to
10 the electrical ground of the vehicle.

Figure 2 depicts a variant embodiment of the invention in which the lining 3 of the brake pad 2 is equipped with a wear indicator 11, formed of an electrical
15 conductor embedded in the material of the friction lining 3 and intended to come into contact with the brake disk 1 when the extent to which the friction lining 3 is worn reaches a predetermined value, for example equal to one fifth of the thickness of the lining. This wear indicator 11 is connected to an
20 electrical conductor 12 external to the friction lining 3, this conductor 12 itself being connected to signaling means generally comprising a light indicator which, when lit up, informs the driver of the vehicle
25 that the brake pads need to be replaced.

According to the invention, only that part of the friction lining 3 that lies between the metal backing 4 and the wear indicator 11 contains an electrically
30 conducting material C in granular or powder form which means that it is the conductivity or electrical resistivity of this part of the lining 3 that will be measured when monitoring the application of the brake.

35 To do this, the monitoring device according to the invention comprising the measurement apparatus 5 and the electrical power supply circuit 6 which have already been described is connected by an electrical conductor 7 to the metal backing 4 of the brake pad and

to the metal conductor 12 of the wear indicator 11.

As in the embodiment of Figure 1, the output of the measurement apparatus 5 is connected to the means 9 for 5 comparing the measured values with prerecorded values. As an alternative, the electrical impedance of the lining is measured at one or more frequencies of an AC current and/or at high frequency.

10 The way in which the device according to the invention works will now be described with reference to Figure 3.

This figure is a graph representing the curve of the variation, as a function of time t , of the force 15 applied to the friction lining 3 when applying the parking brake.

This curve comprises a first part 20 representing gradual application of the brake, between the instant 20 t_0 of actuation of the parking brake command by the driver of the vehicle and the instant t_1 where the brake-application force reaches a maximum value. This first part 20 of the curve is followed by a second part 21 which is a steady state corresponding to the 25 maintaining of the maximal application force between the instants t_1 and t_2 , the instant t_2 corresponding to the end of the application of the brake-application force exerted by the hydraulic braking circuit once the 30 brake has been mechanically locked in the brakes-applied position.

The time interval $t_1 - t_2$ may be relatively short, for example of the order of one second.

35 The second part of the curve is followed by a third part 22 between the instants t_2 and t_3 which corresponds to mechanical relaxation of the brake, the force F experienced by the lining 3 decreasing slightly between a value corresponding to the force of

application by the hydraulic brake and a value corresponding to the force of application maintained by the mechanical locking of the brake in the brakes-applied position.

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The third part 22 of the curve is followed by a fourth part 23 which corresponds to possible thermal relaxation of the brake and which may be more or less pronounced according to the temperature of the brake 10 when the command to apply the automatic parking brake was received. This fourth part 23 of the curve between the instants t₃ and t₄ therefore corresponds to the return of the brake to a normal temperature, the brake-application force at the instant t₄ being less than the 15 brake-application force at the instant t₃ because of the cooling-instigated contraction of the brake components. The fifth part 24 of the curve after the instant t₄ is a steady state where the value of the force F is constant.

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The device according to the invention is then calibrated by recording values S₁, S₂, S₃ and S₄ for the output signal of the measurement apparatus 5 which correspond to the various parts of the curve depicted 25 in Figure 3, in the case of correct application of the automatic parking brake. The value S₁ is an initial value measured at the instant t₀ when application of the automatic parking brake is commanded, the value S₂ is recorded between the instants t₁ and t₂, the value 30 S₃ is recorded at the instant t₃ at the end of mechanical relaxation of the brake and the value S₄ is recorded at the instant t₄ during or after cooling of the brake (for example 30 minutes after the command to apply the parking brake).

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Thereafter, monitoring correct application of the automatic parking brake consists in comparing the output signal from the measurement apparatus 5 with the recorded value S₁ at the instant t₀, then with the

recorded value S2, at an instant between t₁ and t₂, then with the recorded value S3, at an instant corresponding to the instant t₃ and finally with the recorded value S4 at an instant corresponding to the 5 instant t₄ (if no command to release the automatic parking brake has been issued by the driver of the vehicle in the meantime).

If one of the values of the output signal from the 10 measurement apparatus 5 is significantly below the recorded values S2, S3 and S4, that is to say if the discrepancy between the output signal from the apparatus 5 and these recorded values exceeds a predetermined value, it is possible from this to deduce 15 that the automatic parking brake has not been applied sufficiently firmly and the means 9 once again command the application of this parking brake. At the same time, a signal may be emitted for the attention of the driver of the vehicle. The further command to apply the 20 parking brake makes it possible, for example, for this brake to be reapplied if the reduction in the braking force during the cooling interval t₃ - t₄ has been relatively high.

25 Instead of comparing the values of the output signal from the apparatus 5 with the prerecorded values, it is possible beforehand to calculate differences and/or ratios between these measurements and to compare these with similar differences and/or ratios in the 30 prerecorded values, in order to circumvent the influence of certain parameters, such as ambient temperature or pad wear.

In the preferred embodiment, the values S2-S1, S2-S3, 35 S2-S4, S3-S4 and/or S3-S1 are compared with the predetermined corresponding values in order to determine whether the pads 2 have been correctly applied to the disk 1. If the difference S3-S4 exceeds a predetermined threshold it is considered that

unacceptable thermal relaxation (or roll away) is present and the braking circuit computer reapplies the parking brake for example by switching on a high-pressure pump of the braking system ESP hydraulic unit.

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In a variant embodiment of the invention, another physical property of the brake pad and/or of its friction lining is measured, for example its acoustic impedance, using a sensor that advantageously forms an 10 emitter and a receiver, such as an ultrasound sensor for example.